



# A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE TEACHER VIEWS ON THE CLASSROOM FREEDOM AND STUDENT-TEACHER CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## ABSTRACT

Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits and only the teacher can facilitates learning by making the classroom effective. In schools, the importance of classroom freedom becomes even greater as it provides the children the opportunity to open up, removes their doubts, finds it convenient to overcome any kind of hesitation and develop a 'we' feeling essentially needed. Focus groups were used to obtain participants views about the classroom freedom. The participants were 15 primary school teachers teaching in R.R.K. school of Moradabad district U.P. who had teaching experience of minimum 2 years selected by using simple random sampling technique and two sections of 5th class of R.R.K. school were selected using convenient sampling technique. To analyze the data, code and categories focus group data were adapted from approaches to qualitative data analysis. The participants were interviewed using semi structured questionnaire to assess teacher's views on classroom freedom and the non participatory observation checklists were observed on both the sections of 5th class (ten classes -5 per section) for about 20 minutes each class to determine student- teacher classroom interaction. Four themes emerged from the focus group data, from the participants 'point of view,' teachers views regarding classroom freedom, "teachers behaviour", "students behaviour", classroom interaction, were considered as important factors in teachers views about the classroom freedom. Findings from the selected 15 participants viewed that classroom freedom was necessary to manage the class as well to make the teaching-learning process effective and results based on the non participatory observation checklist were, the student teacher classroom interaction was appreciable as teachers were giving reinforcement, creating democratic environment in the class, whereas, the students were responding well towards teachers question and overall classroom interaction was effective on all the parameters. Hence, the study concluded that, class-room freedom is essentially required for keeping students' academic interest alive. It not only increases the creativity of the students in general, it also allows the struggling students to open up. The study recommended that an experimental study can be undertaken to study the impact of classroom freedom on the students' performance.

**KEYWORDS:** classroom interaction, classroom freedom, reinforcement, teaching-learning, democratic environment, struggling, teacher views.

## INTRODUCTION:

Education is a process of inviting truth and possibility. Education can be defined as the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Learners are active in teaching learning process which creates a set of expectations used in an organized classroom environment. It includes routines, rules and consequences. A suitable learning environment is necessary for a healthy teaching learning process. Teacher should not impose his or her ideas on students. Teachers should not interfere in their freedom. Effective classroom management paves the way for the teacher to engage the students in learning. The teachers have to create an environment that would allow creative thinking among students. It is their responsibility to inculcate in the students the value of freedom. Greene (1995) calls for teachers to include the voices of those "long silenced" to "make way for the untried and unexpected. Class-room freedom seems to include freedom for the students to express themselves, to develop their unique abilities, freedom from autocratic imposition of subject-matter and shifting passivity of learning. Classroom freedom is a key component of any part of democratic set-up. In schools, the importance of classroom freedom becomes even greater as it provides the children the opportunity to open up. The children, by virtue of freedom, constantly interact in the class, removes their doubts, finds it convenient to overcome any kind of inhibitions and develop a 'we' feeling essentially needed to perform actively. Freedom is the condition of being free, the power of act or speak or think without extremely imposed restrains.

## NEED OF THE STUDY:

As class-room freedom provides better exposure to the students by helping them to get rid of all kinds of fear and its utility as class-room strategy cannot be denied. Even NCF in (2005), strongly advocates for the autonomy and freedom to be given to them so that they could become constructors of knowledge in the real sense of the world. However, it is observed that in most of the class-room teaching-learning situation, teachers still maintain their dominance which often promotes the culture of silence in the class-room. Many a time's wonderful thoughts of the students remain imprisoned. They at times find it difficult to be a part of the teaching-learning process which causes them to be poor recipients of knowledge. Sometimes, they find problems in the concept attainment which gradually results in development of the feeling of disinterest towards the subject. On the other hand, the teachers who encourage their students to open up and find later not only develop their language skills but also basic proficiency in the subjects on the rapid pace. Hence, there is a greater need today for maintaining the democratic conditions in the class-rooms as with the expansion of education, students from varied socio-cultural backgrounds, are coming to the field of education.

Keeping in view of the above, the investigator is intended to carry out a modest study on the teacher views on the class-room freedom and student - teacher classroom interaction.

## METHODOLOGY:

A focus group design was used to investigate the participants view about the classroom freedom. Focus group involves organized discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic and is particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic. Focus groups are widely used as a data collection technique. The purpose of using focus group is to obtain information of a qualitative nature from a predetermined and limited number of people. Using focus group in qualitative research concentrates on words and observations to express reality and attempts to describe people in natural situations. After approval by the institutional ethical committee and written informed consent was obtained from the study participants, the sampling frame consisted of 15 primary school teachers teaching in R.R.K school of Moradabad district U.P. who had teaching experience of minimum 2 years and were divided into three focus groups (5 each) by using simple random sampling technique and two sections of 5th class OF R.R.K school using convenient sampling technique. Before administering the tools in the school, the researcher took the permission of the principal regarding the visit to the classroom and the investigator met the selected primary school teachers who were interviewed using open ended questionnaire included 12 items to assess teacher views on classroom freedom for about 15 to 25 minutes were audio taped. Audio-tapes were subsequently transcribed the participants data and qualitative thematic content analysis was done by two investigators to develop a preliminary coding scheme. The coding scheme facilitated the systematic identification of analytic patterns that became apparent from the data, as well as theoretically important concepts. Limited demographic information was obtained from participants. Eight of the fifteen interviews were conducted in Hindi, seven interviews were conducted in English.

In accordance with the selected participants time - table of 5th class, the investigator observed two teachers teaching in 5th class and observed ten classes, 5 classes for each participant for about 5 days (2 classes per day) for 20 minutes by using non participatory observation checklists to observe classroom interaction which was broadly classified into three dimensions - class room interaction, teacher behaviour and student behaviour. The observation checklist helped the investigator to carefully measure and records the data as objectively as possible.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

The following steps were undertaken in the focus group data analysis.

Immediate debriefing after each focus group with the observer and debriefing notes were made. Debriefing notes included comments about the focus group process and the significance of data. Listening to the tape and transcribing the content of the tape. Checking the content of the tape with the observer noting and considering any non-verbal behaviour. The benefit of transcription and checking the contents with the observer was in picking up the following: parts of words, non-verbal communication, gestures and behaviour.

The researcher facilitated the groups. The observer was a health educator who attended all focus groups and helped the researcher by taking notes and observing students' on non-verbal behaviour during the focus group sessions. Observer was not known to students and researcher the methods used to code and categorise focus group data were adapted from approaches to qualitative content analysis discussed by Graneheim and Lundman and focus group data analysis by Stewart and Shamdasani for coding the transcript it was necessary to go through the transcripts line by line and paragraph by paragraph, looking for significant statements and codes according to the topics addressed. The researcher compared the various codes based on differences and similarities and sorted into categories and finally the categories were formulated into 4 themes. The researcher was guided to use and three levels of coding. Three levels of coding selected as appropriate for coding the data. Level 1 coding examined the data line by line and making codes which were taken from the language of the subjects who attended the focus groups. Level 2 coding which is a comparing of coded data with other data and the creation of categories. Categories are simply coded data that seem to cluster together and may result from condensing of level 1 level 3 coding which describes the title given to the central themes that emerge from the categories. Non participatory observation checklist included three dimensions which was statistically analyzed in terms of percentage to observe teacher behaviour, student behaviour and classroom interaction.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Most of the participants were females (%66.6) and males (%33.3) with age between 25-30 years. The qualitative analysis led to the emergence of the four themes from the focus group data- teacher views regarding classroom freedom, teacher behaviour, student behaviour and student teacher interaction in the classroom.

### Theme 1- Participants views regarding classroom freedom

This theme emerged from all focus group discussion where participants described the views regarding classroom freedom. Almost all the participants viewed that classroom freedom is essential to enhance the teaching – learning process effective.

Some of the participants viewed that-

My views towards the classroom freedom is.... it must be given to the students but to some extent where there is need of it, being a primary section teacher many a times students feel hesitated in clarifying their doubts. (P1, P3, P4)

Majority of the participants viewed that-

I think that being a teacher classroom freedom is very important but simultaneously it is necessary to take immediate action if the class is out of control otherwise other students will take advantage of teacher's lenience. (P2, P6, P7, P8)

I believe in classroom freedom but sometimes I also feel that daily routine makes the class boredom so sometimes we should organize co- curricular activities to open up the students. By this way they would not be tired from daily routine. (P5, P9, P10, P13)

As per my views in today's changing era, it is very- very necessary to think about classroom freedom, as daily in newspaper suicide cases indicate it is only restriction that makes the students to go on that path way. So restrictions are necessary but freedom is very - very necessary. (P11, P12, P14, P15)

As classroom freedom is necessary which is viewed by almost all the teachers but to some extent because too much freedom spoils the classroom learning environment.

### Theme 2 - Participants views on teacher behaviour

I think that teacher is the only person after family who shapes the students personality so being a teacher, teacher behaviour must be polite with students' not always rude, try to understand the student's nature for better learning. (P4, P6, P7, P9, P10)

What I think about teacher's behaviour is that it is very necessary for the teacher to be impartial with every student. (P1, P2, P8, P14, P11)

Being a teacher I believe that teacher is like a mirror for the students, not all but some of the students think that I would be like my Hindi teacher or math teacher.....etc.(P3,P12,P5)

I feel that the teacher behaviour must be friendly with students so that the students feel free to share academic problems like ..... why they are lazy in studies and irregularity. (P13, P14, P15)

As teachers' behaviour is also very important towards the student's betterment in teaching learning process.

### Theme -3 Participants views on student behaviour

As per my view, it is utmost requirement for every student to give respect to their teachers as it is basis ethics to be learnt. (P3, P5, P8, P9, P11)

I believe that student's behaviour should be fair with the fellow beings in the class as well as with the teachers. (P7, P13, P14)

As per my thinking, students behaviour must be good towards the teachers and their friends but many students does not know how to behave with the teacher in the class like in my class some of the students are very mischievous and always disturbs me and the other students during teaching. (P1, P2, P4, P6, P10, P12, P15) Students have to show their respectable attitude towards their teachers and enhance their strength and remove the weakness for their better future.

### Theme - 4 Participants views on Student teacher interaction

What I believe about student- teacher interaction is it should be positive towards each other. So that the classroom teaching will be effective. (P1, P7, P9, P10, P11)

According to me, the interaction between students and teacher should be always healthy because teacher is the prime importance for the students and the students.....are like beautiful diamonds for the teachers. (P3, P5, P8, P13, P15)

I think that the interaction between students and teacher should be like a mother and child as teacher should always acts as a motivator for the students and student must be ready to obey the instructions given by the teachers. (P2, P4, P6, P12, P14)

The interaction between Students- teachers should be healthy and teacher should act as an inspiration towards their students and students must be obliged towards their teachers.

Non participatory observations done by the investigator

The investigator had used the non participatory checklist with fifteen items to observe the student teacher interaction, teacher's behaviour and student behaviour. Each checklist was used to observe ten classes of 5th class section A and B, (5 classes each) and for about 20 minutes.

### Dimension - 1 Class-room Interaction:

It was observed that 15 areas identified under this dimension. Both teacher and students interaction was observed. Class-room interaction involves the exchange of ideas, views and opinions. It helps to develop the critical thinking and widen students thinking. Ten classes (5 classes per section) were observed by the investigator to ascertain whether there was class room interaction present or not, following were the major highlights:

- In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers would meet the students personally to help them in their difficulties whenever the need felt by the teachers.
- In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers allowed late comers to enter into the class but the teacher also asked the reason for coming late in the class.
- In the 100% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teacher never commented upon the physical appearance of the students.
- In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers did not have friendly relations with the students; the teacher was authoritative and dominative in nature.
- In the 100% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers never pushed out a student from the class-room due to any mistake.
- In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers dealt with all the students equally. Every child was important in the teaching learning process. This type of opportunity provided encouragement and confidence to the pupils, but sometimes teacher showed favoritism towards some students and at that time they became partial towards others.
- In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers encouraged pupils' questioning attitude, but in the 20% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that pupils asked irrelevant questions such types of questions were discouraged by the teachers.
- In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that pupils were kept under strict control. It showed teachers' dominance in the classroom.
- In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers interacted with pupils in a welcoming manner.

- j. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers gave positive responses to each of the pupil.
- k. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that 80% of the teacher was giving opportunities to the students to explore their environment.
- l. In the 100% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teacher discouraging students from making personal comments on other students physical appearance.
- m. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teacher encouraging students to make the mistakes freely.
- n. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers encouraging students to choose the members with whom they would like to work in the activities.
- o. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that the teachers were helping students in correcting their mistakes.

#### Dimension - 2 Teacher behaviour:

Teacher's behaviour in the teaching-learning process is very important because it is the only way to come closer to the students and know about the student's merits and demerits, if the teacher's behaviour is democratic in the class-room it could develop lot of skills and qualities in the students as: - how to express yourself, make more creative and innovative and learn the value of unity and majority. If the teacher's behaviour is polite and respectful towards the students, it will be more helpful to develop self-respect and self-confidence among the students and this will take part in every teaching-learning process activity. Teacher's behaviour should be ideal because students' are followers of the teachers. The role of the teacher in the class-room should therefore as that facilitator because it is helpful for them to develop student's constructive thinking and creativity.

Ten classes (5 classes per section) observed by the investigator to ascertain about teacher behaviour, following were the major highlights:

- a. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers showed generality of group rejection; superiority of teacher indicated. They freedom to pupils to react and respond but the final answer or conclusion was provided by the teacher. Authority of decision making was in the hands of teachers. What should be taught, how it should be taught was decided by the teachers. The teachers also took decisions of the class-room rules and their home work.
- b. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers showed equal treatment of the all students. Every student was equal in the eyes of teacher, but sometimes teachers gave importance and attention to the high achievers.
- c. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were ready to respond and react with sympathy.
- d. In the 60% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were interested in what was going on in class and they were enthusiastic.
- e. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers took steps to satisfy pupils as per their needs.
- f. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers allowed pupils to leave their seats and move from the room only with permission. It showed teacher's dominance and authority in the class-room.
- g. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were intolerant of ideas or suggestions made by pupils.
- h. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers encouraged group discussion.
- i. In the 60% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were benevolent and friendly with students, but they showed their dominance sometimes where they became strict towards the pupil.
- j. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers gave complete, accurate, and satisfying answers to pupils' questions.
- k. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers did not show any bias or prejudice. In fact, teachers treated students equally.
- l. In the 100% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers emphasized mistakes and errors.
- m. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were cheerful and good natured.

- n. In the 60% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were accepting pupil's response and not hyperactive.
- o. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that teachers were active and not interested only to it on the chairs.

#### Dimension - 3 Student behaviour:

Pupil's behaviour in the teaching-learning process is the core sector of education. All the education objectives and goals are focused on the students behaviour is the outcome product of the entire teaching-learning process. That is why student's behaviour in the class with his/her fellow in class-room should be based on alertness, enthusiasm, curiosity, receptiveness, co-operation, good humour, respectfulness, and tolerance for one another. Apart from the above, he/she should always be ready for taking initiative in any of the class-room activity.

Of the ten classes (5 classes per section) observed by the investigator to ascertain whether there was class-room freedom and its relative affect on students' performance where the dimension of the student's behaviour, following were the major highlights:-

- a. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were alert, enthusiastic and responded eagerly.
- b. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were interested in what was going on and not appeared immersed in their own work.
- c. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's behavior was appropriate to the occasion.
- d. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were spiritual, willing and show caring attitude.
- e. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's volunteered the ideas, made plans and offered suggestions. Teachers gave them freedom to think. Students gave suggestions but the final conclusion was given by the teacher.
- f. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were unable to carry on the work sincerely when teachers left the room, work deteriorated in absence of teachers.
- g. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's gave evidence of original thinking and creativity, exhibited mental curiosity.
- h. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were receptive, co-operated in class activities.
- i. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were aggressive, hostile and quarrelsome.
- j. In the 90% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were helpful, friendly, and good humored.
- k. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were highly competitive.
- l. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were attentive.
- m. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were active, co-operated in the classroom activities.
- n. In the 60% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were tolerant, showing respect for one another and far minded.
- o. In the 80% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were spontaneous in work initiation and entered freely into activities.
- p. In the 70% of classes observed by the investigator, it was found that student's were willing to try new problems.

#### CONCLUSION:

The finding of this study and the literature support, the participants viewed about the classroom freedom. It is clear that all themes mentioned by the participants play an important role in student learning and to make the teaching learning process effective in general. Participants expressed their views and concerned about the classroom freedom, teacher's behaviour, student's behaviour and classroom interaction. Going by the findings of the study, it may be concluded that classroom freedom is essentially required for keeping students' academic interest alive. It not only increases the creativity of the students in general, it also allows the struggling students to open up. Thus, class-room freedom is a departure from the traditional method of teaching which would maintain culture of silence in the

class. As education means all round development of personality of an individual, it can be possibly done so when teacher gives attentive ears to what their students say and according to their needs. The result of this study would help us as educators to think about classroom freedom to make the teaching learning process effective. The results of this study should be considered in every field of education. The study recommended that an experimental study can be undertaken to study the impact of classroom freedom on the students' performance.

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